

April 3, 2009

61<sup>st</sup> Montana Legislature  
Senate Natural Resources Committee  
Senator Kelly Gebhardt, Chairman

Re: HB-674 and HB-669

Chairman Gebhardt and Committee Members:

Due to previous commitments, I am not able to attend the committee hearings on HB-674 and HB-669, scheduled for April 6<sup>th</sup>. However, I did want to convey the support of the Seeley Lake Driftriders for these legislative bills. We had previously expressed our support for HB-14 when it was first considered in the House, and we continue to support the bipartisan effort put forth to accomplish the goals outlined in the current legislation.

The Seeley Lake Driftriders is a group of outdoor enthusiasts that enjoys and appreciates the opportunities for snowmobile recreation in our area. We currently have 128 members representing 324 riders, which is a sizeable club for a small town.

Recreation is very vital to Montana, there is no way to put a price tag on our recreation. We live here for that, we raise our children here for that, our friends come here for that. There is no way to put a dollar value on it. However, as private timberlands are converted to private residential uses, our ability enjoy traditional recreation opportunities are constrained. We recognize that unless certain investments are made today, our children may not have the same recreational access opportunities we enjoy today.

This is why the proposed land acquisition by the State, as authorized under HB-674, is so important. We should not let this opportunity pass by. We should maintain our rural landscapes as working forests, open to recreational uses, and benefiting both our schools and the recreating public.

The companion bill, HB-669, is also important because it will provide financial assistance to the private sector that we depend upon for processing our forest products. Seeley Lake is home to Pyramid Mountain Lumber, and we are very aware of the economic value of that facility. It provides employment opportunities, contributes to our local tax base, and serves as a critical link between the management of our rural forestland and the availability of wood products to the consumer.

In tandem, these bills will encourage the long term sustainability of our forest industry and our recreational opportunities. We encourage your support of HB-674 and HB-669.

Thanks for your consideration,

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